

IT'S TIME TO LEARN.

DECOLONIZE YOUR LIFE:



FOR BEGINNERS

TRAUMATIZED  THRIVING

Traumatized THRIVING

CONTENT & ART

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Introduction

Decolonization isn't a metaphor. It's not a trend. It's definitely not some feel-good self-improvement journey that lets us off the hook. It's messy, uncomfortable, deeply personal, AND it's collective. It's about examining the beliefs we were handed & challenging each of them. Only then will we be able to build something new, something that is rooted in truth, justice, integrity & ancestral wisdom.

If you're here, you probably already feel it. You know, that sense that something is "off". That the world we live in wasn't built for our **THRIVING**. Rather, we've been gaslit into accepting oppression as the norm, and just "the way things are."

Colonialism isn't just some old history lesson, it's alive in all our bodies, our relationships, our economies & our nervous systems. It shapes what we believe about success, beauty, intelligence & even rest.

Decolonization means examining all our beliefs & unlearning the bullshit we've been force-fed our whole lives.

This is about remembering who the fuck we are.

Who we were before capitalism, white supremacy & the U.S. empire tried to make us forget. It means questioning EVERYTHING — our education, our belief systems & our own participation in oppressive structures. It's about returning to ourselves, our communities & the ways of knowing that were stolen from us.

Who Is This Guide For?



If you're questioning the Western-centric, individualistic, grind-till-you-die way of life, you're in the right place.



If you've felt disconnected from your culture, your body or your intuition, this is for you.



If you're done centering whiteness (your own and/or others') & you're ready to engage in real, messy, decolonizing work, let's fucking go.

No, you don't have to be an expert. And no, you don't have to have all the answers. You couldn't possibly, **NO ONE DOES**. But you do have to be willing to unlearn, to sit with discomfort — not harm but *discomfort* — while you resist the urge to intellectualize your way out of accountability.

This won't be a one-time thing. Decolonization is a lifelong process. But every step, every moment of questioning, every refusal to comply, every act of reclamation, is an act of defiance, a statement of intent & a practice that brings us closer to **Collective Liberation**. **#GOALS**

I'm so glad you're here.

Warmly,

alisha 

Content Warning

This eBook discusses the impacts of colonialism, systemic oppression & intergenerational trauma. Some sections explore themes of racial violence, cultural erasure & forced assimilation, which may bring up strong emotions and/or resurfaced memories.

I approach these topics through a trauma-informed & anti-racist lens, prioritizing your emotional & nervous system safety. Decolonization is both a deeply personal & collective process. The healing will not be straight forward.

Please engage with this material at a pace that feels right for you. If at any point you feel overwhelmed, I encourage you to pause, ground yourself & seek support from trusted community members, healers or professionals who align with your values.

Your feelings, whether grief, anger, numbness, or exhaustion, are **ALWAYS** valid.

You are not alone in this journey. Liberation is a process, & you deserve to navigate it with care, support & self-compassion.



Content Notes

You'll find a glossary toward the end of this book. I included as many words & concepts as I thought might need defining, or would just be helpful to clarify.

Language shapes how we understand things, so I want to be as clear as possible about what I mean when I use certain terms.

Please note, these definitions are specific to this material & my perspective. There are plenty of other ways to define these words & that's okay. I encourage you to explore other resources, and find what resonates with you.

Speaking of resources — at the end of this book, you'll also find a curated resource list that I hope guides you to your next step. These resources are certainly not exhaustive. As you continue to grow your own resource list, I hope you'll continue to share with the **Traumatized & THRIVING** community. Resisting gatekeeping with ongoing dialogue, connection & camaraderie moves us away from isolation & closer to our goal of collective liberation.

You'll also notice journal prompts, somatic exercises, & reflection invitations woven throughout the chapters.

I want to lovingly nudge you: please don't just read through them. Actually sit with them. Grab a pen, some paper, and give yourself permission to slow down & be with what comes up. Without judgment & with ALL the self-compassion.

(Continued...)

Content Notes

There's something extremely powerful about physically writing, it activates different parts of your brain, helps you process more deeply & often brings out insights you didn't even know were waiting to be realized. These practices aren't here to test you, they're here to support your unfolding, your unbecoming. The more you bring your whole self to the page, the more this work can meet you where you're really at.

For those whom writing is not your preference or most accessible modality, you are encouraged to utilize the journal prompts to express your creativity through song, movement or art. You might find yourself inclined to record in audio or video form as a warm reminder to yourself of your homecoming.

I hope you find these tools helpful.



Chapter 1:
— ♥ —
What is Colonization?

Let's be real, colonization isn't just some old history lesson. It's alive, breathing & embedded in damn near every part of ALL our daily lives. It's the reason why so many of us feel like we're always running on fumes, why we struggle to rest without guilt, and why we're stuck surviving rather than THRIVING. Colonization isn't just about land theft (though, that's a massive part of it — **#LANDBACK**).

It's about control.

Control over our bodies, our minds, our cultures & our futures. Colonization was never just about planting flags & rewriting maps, it was about rewriting reality. It was about erasing Indigenous ways of being, criminalizing rest & joy, and gaslighting entire peoples into believing that their traditions, languages, and ways of knowing, existing & being were "less than." And guess what??? It's in the way capitalism keeps us grinding, in the way white supremacy defines beauty, intelligence & belonging, in the ways that these systems keep our nervous systems locked in survival mode.

Colonization Shows Up In:



Settler Colonialism: Land theft, the displacement of Indigenous Peoples, and systems designed to erase native sovereignty. It never ended. It just shapeshifted.



Cultural Imperialism: Western beauty, language & values being pervasively presented as the "default" while anything else is labeled something on a spectrum from "exotic" to "uncivilized."

Colonization Shows Up In:



Economic Exploitation: Capitalism thrives on colonial legacies. When land, labour & natural resources have always been stolen, exploited & commodified, we feel the impact on all fronts.



Nervous System Hijacking: Capitalist & colonial systems demand that we ignore our bodies; teaching us to push through exhaustion & grind until we break. **Literally.** This hustle culture disconnects us from our intuition, from joy, from truly savouring & celebrating moments, and from each other.



Self-Reflection Prompt

Unlearning the Lies About Success & Self-Worth

For the most part, our ideas about success, beauty & even self-worth weren't born from us. They were handed down, reinforced & rewarded by systems designed to keep us exhausted, insecure & chasing an impossible standard.

Ask yourself:



Who taught me what success looks like? Was it school, family, social media?



Who benefits from me believing that success comes from productivity, perfection or having a certain appearance?



How have colonial ideas about beauty, work, or intelligence shaped my dreams?

(Continued...)

Let's disrupt the programming.

Write down:

➤ 5 ways you **WANT** to be perceived, authentically, in your own truth.

➤ 5 ways you **DO NOT** want to be perceived, ways society has projected onto you that you're ready to shed.

**No self-censorship. No people-pleasing.
Just YOU, reclaiming your story.**

The work begins with naming it.

Decolonization starts with awareness. Naming the ways colonization moves through our thoughts, relationships & bodies is the first step.

The next step?

Unlearning, relearning & reclaiming what was stolen from us.

Take a deep breath.

This work is heavy, but you are not in this alone.

We unlearn together.

We heal together.

We rebuild together — something reciprocal that nourishes all beings & the planet.



Somatic Reflection

Find a quiet place & sit or lie down.

Take a deep breath in through your nose, **hold for a moment**, then **exhale slowly**.

Place your hands on your body, your heart, your belly,
wherever feels grounding.

Notice any tension, tightness or sensations that arise as
you reflect on the impact of colonization in your life.

What does your body feel?

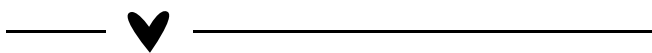
Where does it hold these stories?

Breathe into those spaces.

Offer yourself compassion.

You are allowed to feel, to grieve, to release.

You are allowed to reclaim your body as yours.



Chapter 2:

Recognizing Internalized
Colonialism

Let's talk about the colonizer in our heads. The one that whispers, "You're not enough," "You have to work twice as hard," "You need to prove your worth." That voice? Yeah, that's **internalized colonialism**. It's the programming that got baked into us through education (aka indoctrination), the media, the workforce & what are considered social norms. And it runs deep in **ALL of us**.

No one, regardless of race, is exempt from it.

We weren't born believing we had to earn rest, that our ancestral traditions were "less advanced," or that assimilation = success. We were taught those things.

We absorbed these messages over time, and now they show up in the ways we see ourselves & each other. The good news is that **what's been learned can be unlearned**.

And we're about to start that process right now.

How Internalized Colonialism Shows Up:



Western Beauty Standards: Straight hair, lighter skin, thin bodies. We've been told that Eurocentric features are the standard & everything else is "exotic" or "unprofessional".



The Grind Mindset: Feeling like you always have to be productive to be valuable. Struggling to rest without guilt.



Disconnection from Ancestral Practices: Feeling embarrassed or hesitant to engage in your own cultural traditions because they've been labelled as "backward."

(Continued...)

How Internalized Colonialism Shows Up:

-  **Language & Accent Shame:** Believing that "proper" English (aka white-coded English) is the only way to sound "educated" or "professional" (aka sounding "white")
-  **Policing Ourselves & Each Other:** Judging ourselves or our communities for not conforming to colonial expectations of success, behaviour or achievement.



Journal Prompt

Reclaiming My Mind from the Colonizer's Voice

That inner voice that whispers, "You're not enough," "You have to prove your worth," "You need to work twice as hard."
Yeah, that's not you. That's the colonizer in your head.

Let's name it.
Let's dismantle it.



Write down 3-5 ways colonial programming has shaped how you see yourself. Think beauty, work, both personal & professional relationships, language & traditions. Where does it show up in your life?

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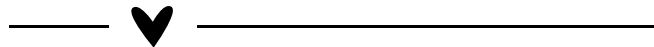


Now, rewrite each belief in a way that aligns with your values. (Example: From “Rest is earned” to “Rest is my right.”)



What’s one ancestral practice, mindset or value you want to reclaim? How can you start integrating it into your daily life?

This is your mind.
You get to write this story.
This is your liberation.



Unlearning Starts with Awareness

Internalized colonialism thrives in silence,
in the spaces where we don’t question it.

But once we name it, once we drag it into the light,
we weaken its grip. This is different from shame, it’s
awareness. The goal isn’t to judge yourself for the ways
colonialism lives in your mind & body. The goal is to notice,
to disrupt the pattern & to learn to choose something
different. Something that is more in **alignment**
with who you want to be tomorrow,
not who you have been taught to be in the past.



Somatic Reflection

Find a mirror.

Stand in front of it & look at yourself, not through the
lens of Eurocentric standards,
but **through the eyes of your ancestors.**

Take a deep breath.

Say out loud: "**I am enough as I am.**

I carry the wisdom of those who came before me.

I do not need to shrink, conform, or prove my worth."

Notice what comes up – resistance, discomfort, grief,
maybe even relief.

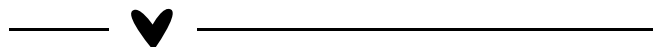
Whatever arises, let yourself feel it.

Place a hand over your heart lovingly.

You are unlearning.

You are coming home to yourself.

Out of your mind & into your body.



Chapter 3:



Unlearning & Relearning: Steps Towards Decolonization

Decolonization isn't just about calling out colonialism, it's about unlearning the lies & reclaiming what was stolen. It's about **disrupting the narratives** we were force-fed to us & making space for truths that were buried.

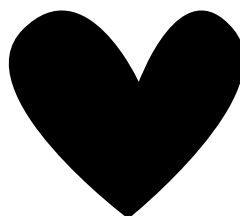
And let's be honest with ourselves & others,
this process is messy. It's disorienting.
If you're really in it, it can feel like free-falling.

Colonialism gave us a script & now we're tossing it out. Change is hard. **Even good change feels uncomfortable at first because it's different...**but different doesn't always mean bad or danger. In fact, in this case, the discomfort that comes with change should be something we look for, something we learn to identify in ourselves as a sign we are doing something different.

Here's the thing:

You were never meant to fit into a script, especially not the one that was given to us by colonial powers.

Unlearning colonial programming isn't about memorizing a new set of rules. It's about **remembering**, who you are, where you came from & the wisdom your ancestors carried before the U.S. empire, capitalism & white supremacy tried to erase it.



What We Must Unlearn:

-  **Eurocentrism in Knowledge:** Western education taught us to prioritize white scholars, white histories & white frameworks. But Indigenous, Black & Non-Western knowledge systems have existed & **THRIVED** long before colonial academia.
-  **Individualism Over Community:** The idea that success is personal rather than collective is colonial conditioning. We heal in relationship, not isolation. Trauma that we experienced in relationship with other humans can only be healed in relationship with safe humans.
-  **The Myth of Objectivity:** Colonialism gaslit us into believing that Western science, philosophy & history are "neutral" or "universal," when in reality, they are deeply deeply biased, framed by uniquely Western contexts & conditions.
-  **Capitalism as the Only Way:** Money isn't the only measure of success. Other economies — ones based on reciprocity, mutual aid & communal care — have existed throughout human history.

What We Must Relearn:

-  **Ancestral Knowledge:** The wisdom of those who came before us still lives in our bones, in our songs & in our stories. We just have to listen.

(Continued...)

What We Must Relearn:



Interdependence: We don't exist alone. Liberation is collective. Healing is collective.



Alternative Ways of Knowing: Oral traditions, intuition, dreams & embodiment are just as valid as books & degrees.



Slowness as Resistance: Urgency & hustle culture are colonial tools. Moving at the speed of care is revolutionary.

Actionable Steps*:



Follow Indigenous, Black & decolonial educators & activists. Learn from them. **Compensate them.**



Seek out knowledge beyond Western academia: read Indigenous texts, engage in oral traditions, sit with elders, if you have access.



Support non-capitalist economies: buy from mutual aid funds, barter, trade, join a Time Bank. Most of all: build relationships beyond money.



Question everything. Who wrote your history books? Who benefits from the knowledge you were taught? Who gets erased?

**Check out the Resources at the end of the book!*



Somatic Reflection

Find a quiet place and sit in stillness.

Close your eyes.

Inhale, and upon a long exhale, imagine yourself shedding the colonial expectations placed upon you.

Take another deep breath.

As you inhale, connect with the beliefs that align with your truth (remember the chapter 2 journal prompt).

With every exhale, **release what no longer serves you.**

Sit for several minutes—inhale aligned beliefs, exhale what no longer serves you; **in, out; in, out.**

Slow, gentle breaths.

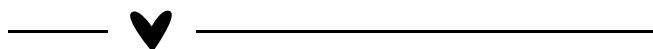
Notice where in your body you feel tension—where the grip of colonialism is still holding on.

Breathe into those spaces.

Remind yourself: I am allowed to unlearn.

I am allowed to remember.

I am allowed to reclaim what was stolen.



Chapter 4:



Decolonizing Identity Language & Thought

**Colonization didn't just take land,
it took languages, histories & ways of thinking.**

Consider the horrifying experiences of Indigenous children, forced into Canada's and the United States' so-called "residential schools".

Colonialism is cultural genocide. It forces entire Peoples to question their worth, their culture, their very existence.

It does this so well that many of us don't even realize we're carrying those wounds.

Decolonizing our identity means peeling back those layers of erasure, challenging the stories we were told about ourselves, and **reclaiming** the languages, words & ways of thinking that were stolen from us.

This isn't just about "being proud" of where you came from. It's about recognizing the deep psychological warfare that colonialism waged on our sense of self & gently undoing it, piece by piece.

How Colonialism Warped Identity:

➤ **Whiteness as the Default:** We were taught that anything outside of whiteness is "other," "less than," or "exotic." That's a lie taught by a fragile minority.

➤ **Language Suppression:** Many of our ancestors were punished for speaking their native tongues. Some of us never even got the chance to learn our ancestral languages.

(Continued...)

How Colonialism Warped Identity:



Erasure of Pre-Colonial Histories: Our histories didn't start with colonization, but that's often the only place they're told from.



Respectability Politics: The idea that we have to "behave" a certain way to be taken seriously by white institutions.



Internalized Self-Policing: The little voice in our heads that tells us we need to shrink, assimilate or prove our worth to belong.

Ways to Decolonize Your Identity:



Reclaim Your Language: If your family's native tongue was stolen from you, consider learning it. Even a few words are an act of resistance.



Name the Erasure: Learn your history – the real history, not what we were taught in school. Learn so that you can name the erasure. Awareness is key to change.



Challenge Western Labels: Terms like "developed" vs. "underdeveloped" are the foundation of the neo-colonial narrative that emerged in the wake of WWII. Ask why these terms emerged & who benefits from these distinctions.



Take Up Space: You don't need permission to exist in your fullness. Speak your truth, wear your culture with pride & reclaim what was lost.



Journal Prompt

Reclaiming the Truth of Who You Are

Colonization wasn't just about stealing land, it was about stealing identity. It erased languages, rewrote histories, and forced us to see ourselves through a distorted lens.

But your identity is yours to reclaim.

Let's start peeling back the layers.

- ♥ Think back to the first time you remember feeling **"othered"**? When did you realize that whiteness was the default, and that you were being measured against it? Write about that moment. **How did it shape you?**
- ♥ What parts of your identity have you ever felt ashamed of, felt the need to hide or downplay? Where did that shame come from? **Who benefits from you feeling that way?**
- ♥ If colonialism never existed, how do you imagine your identity would be different? How would you speak, dress or carry yourself? **What parts of yourself do you want to reclaim?**

**This is about undoing the harm,
rewriting the narrative, and stepping fully
into who you were always meant to be.**



Somatic Reflection

Find a word or phrase in your ancestral language
(or a song or sound that connects you to your roots).

Say or sing it out loud.

Let it roll off your tongue,
let it vibrate through your body.

Notice any resistance, any grief, any joy.

If no word comes to mind, simply place your hands on
your chest and say,

"I am enough as I am."

Breathe into that truth.

Let it settle in your bones.



Chapter 5:

Community & Collective
Liberation

Decolonization was never meant to be a solo mission.

Healing, liberation, and resistance?

They're collective by nature.

But capitalism, colonialism & white supremacy will **gaslight** the hell out of us, making us believe we're on our own, that we have to grind and compete just to survive. The more we're isolated and chasing individual success, the further communal care slips out of reach.

And honestly? That's some bullshit.

**Liberation has always been about us,
not just me.**

Western narratives teach us to be self-sufficient, to "pull ourselves up by the bootstraps," and to see community as a burden instead of the foundation of survival. But the truth is, our ancestors thrived through connection, interdependence & mutual care. Colonization shattered those systems.

Now we get to rebuild them.

How Colonialism Disrupts Community:

-  **Hyper-Individualism:** The idea that we should prioritize "personal success" over collective well-being.
-  **Anti-Blackness & Colourism:** Division within marginalized communities based on proximity to whiteness.
-  **Respectability Politics:** Policing each other to fit white colonial expectations of "acceptable behaviour."

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How Colonialism Disrupts Community:

- **Capitalism's Scarcity Mindset:** The belief that there isn't enough for everyone; forcing us to compete instead of collaborate.
- **Policing of Joy & Celebration:** Colonialism conditions us to see rest, pleasure & community gathering as "unproductive."
- **Forced Displacement:** Colonialism uprooted people from their homelands, severing generations of connection to people, culture and land.
- **Capitalist Individualism:** We've been taught that success is personal rather than collective. That's a colonial mindset.
- **Policing Each Other:** White supremacy trains us to judge, mistrust & compete rather than support & uplift.
- **The Nonprofit Industrial Complex:** Systems that are designed to "help" marginalized communities, but do so by upholding oppressive power structures.

Ways to Decolonize Community & Liberation:

- **Prioritize Relationship Over Transaction:** Community isn't about networking or "what can you do for me?" It's about deep, reciprocal care.
Ask: How can we support each other?

Continued...

Ways to Decolonize Community & Liberation:

- **Support & Amplify:** Show up for Black, Indigenous & other marginalized voices. Don't just consume — invest (without the expectation of a return), uplift & protect.
- **Heal Collective Trauma:** Acknowledge the ways oppression has made us suspicious of one another. **Choose solidarity over division.**
- **Engage in Mutual Aid:** Community care doesn't wait for institutions. It's about direct support, and sharing resources, skills & care.
- **Practice Interdependence:** We don't have to do everything alone. Ask for help, offer support, build reciprocal relationships.
- **De-Center Whiteness:** Prioritize, protect & amplify Indigenous, Black, Brown & anti-colonial voices in movement spaces.
- **Move Beyond Awareness into Action:** Knowing isn't enough. How are you showing up? How are you redistributing resources, labour & power? **What ACTIONS are you taking?**
- **Build Alternative Systems:** Mutual aid, community-led healing spaces, worker-owned collectives — there are many ways to support one another outside the systems of capitalist extraction.
- **Celebrate & Rest Together:** Resistance isn't just about struggle. **Joy, laughter, dance & other forms of pleasure are decolonial practices too.**



Journal Prompt

Reclaiming Community & Collective Care

Capitalism & colonialism have fed us all the lie that we have to do everything alone. That success is individual, that rest is selfish, and that community is a burden.

But deep down, **we know better**. Many of us crave community. We come from people who survived through connection.

We are meant to move together.

Let's unlearn the isolation & reclaim community!

- ♥ How were you taught to think about independence vs. interdependence? Were you raised to believe that asking for help was weak? That relying on others was a failure? Write about where those beliefs came from.
- ♥ Think about a time when community care, whether from family, friends or a broader network, helped you survive or heal. How did it feel? What would life look like if you had more of that?
- ♥ What are three ways you can intentionally nurture & invest in community? How can you practice mutual care, show up for others, or invite more connection into your life?

**Liberation isn't just about tearing down
oppressive systems.**

**It's about rebuilding the ways we love,
support & uplift each other.**



Somatic Reflection

Close your eyes and think of a moment when you felt held by community — whether that was family, friends or a collective space.

Notice what happens in your body as you recall that feeling.

Where do warmth, ease or resistance show up?

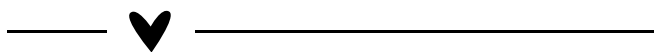
Place a hand over your heart and remind yourself:

I am not alone.

I am part of something greater.

I choose connection over isolation.

Let that truth settle in your nervous system.



Chapter 6:

Reclaiming Our
Nervous Systems

Colonization didn't just reshape our minds, it reshaped our bodies. The stress of surviving under oppressive systems rewires our nervous systems, keeping us stuck in hypervigilance, burnout & disconnection.

We were never meant to live like this.

For generations, our ancestors knew how to regulate, how to co-regulate, how to move with the rhythms of the land & their communities.

Colonialism disrupted that wisdom, replacing it with grind culture, urgency & systems that keep us disconnected from our bodies. But the future is not all doom & gloom: **we can reclaim it.** We can re-learn how to be present in our bodies, how to access rest, how to return to ourselves.

We have the power to transform.

Signs of a Colonized Nervous System:

- **Hyper-Productivity:** Feeling like you have to constantly "earn" your rest.
- **Freeze or Fawn Responses:** Struggling to say no, over-explaining yourself, or shrinking to avoid conflict.
- **Guilt Around Joy & Rest:** Feeling like you need permission to slow down.

(Continued...)

Signs of a Colonized Nervous System:

- **Disconnection from the Body:** Struggling to notice hunger, exhaustion or emotional needs.
- **Chronic Survival Mode:** Always being on edge, waiting for something to go wrong.

Reclaiming Your Nervous System:

- **Somatic Awareness:** Learn to listen to your body. Where do you hold tension? Where does stress live?
- **Land-Based Healing:** Reconnect with nature. Walk barefoot, touch water, lay in the sun.
- **Breathwork & Ancestral Rhythms:** Try breathing techniques that align with traditional practices from your lineage.
- **Reclaiming Rest as Resistance:** Rest isn't a luxury, it's an act of decolonization. Slow down. Pause. Breathe.
- **Community Co-Regulation:** Healing doesn't have to happen alone. Find spaces where your nervous system feels safe, held & seen.





Journal Prompt

Decolonizing Your Nervous System

Colonialism taught us to hustle, to over-function, to ignore our bodies until they break down. But your body was never meant to exist in a constant state of survival. You deserve to rest. You deserve to feel safe in your own skin.

**Liberation has always been about us,
not just 'me'.**

Let's begin that reclamation now.



How does your body respond to stress? Do you freeze, fawn, overwork, numb out? Where do you feel stress in your body?



What messages did you receive growing up about rest, productivity or slowing down? Who taught you those beliefs, and who benefits from you believing them?



What are three ways you can start reconnecting with your body this week? Think small — breathing deeper, stretching, moving without a goal, or simply noticing when you're tired.

**You are NOT a machine.
You don't have to EARN peace.
Reclaiming your nervous system is
reclaiming your freedom.**



Somatic Reflection

Take a deep breath in and exhale slowly.

Place a hand on your heart and the other on your belly.

Notice the rise and fall of your breath.

Whisper to yourself:

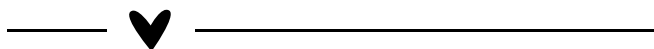
I am allowed to rest.

I am allowed to feel.

I am allowed to heal.

Repeat this until it feels true,
until your body begins to believe it.

Let your nervous system absorb this truth —
you are safe to reclaim yourself.



Chapter 7:



Meditations for Decolonization

Colonization taught us to disconnect, from our bodies, our breath, the land & our ancestors. Meditation is more than a wellness trend; **it's a reclamation.** It's about coming back to yourself, not in isolation, but in connection – to your lineage, to the earth, to the wisdom that was never truly lost. These guided meditations are an invitation to remember, to release & to return to what has always been yours.



Meditation #1

Returning to the Land

Find a quiet place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes. **Take a deep breath in, then exhale slowly.**

Imagine yourself standing in a place your ancestors once knew – a land that held them, nurtured them, sustained them. **Let the details come to you.** What do you see? What do you smell? What sounds surround you?

With each breath, imagine your feet sink deeper into the earth. Let it hold you. **Let it remind you that you belong.**

Place your hands on your heart and whisper: I am of the land. **The land remembers me.**

Stay here as long as you need. When you're ready, slowly return to the present, carrying this connection with you.



Meditation #2

Releasing Colonial Guilt & Shame

Sit comfortably. Notice where tension sits in your body.

Breathe into those spaces.

Picture a warm, golden light surrounding you, this is your **ancestral wisdom**. It has always been here.

As you inhale, **let this light fill your body**. As you exhale, release the weight of shame, guilt, and the need to prove your worth.

Whisper to yourself: **I release what is not mine to hold.**

I return to myself.

Let yourself rest in this feeling. **You are worthy.**

You always have been.



Meditation #3

Reclaiming Your Voice

Place a hand over your throat. Feel the warmth of your palm. Take a deep breath in, then exhale with a sigh.

Think of the ways colonialism has silenced you – times you were told to shrink, to stay quiet, to not take up space.

(Continued...)



Meditation #3 (cont.)

Reclaiming Your Voice (cont.)

As you breathe in, imagine **reclaiming your voice**. See it as a powerful force, rising from deep within you.

Say out loud: **My voice is sacred**. My truth is powerful. I take up space without apology.

Repeat as many times as you need. Let your voice vibrate through your body.

Let it awaken what was once silenced.



Self-Reflection Prompt

What emotions or sensations arose during these meditations?

Where did you feel resistance?

What does your body need from you in this moment?

Chapter 8:

♥

Affirmations for
Decolonial Healing

Affirmations are more than just words,
they're a reclamation.

Colonization conditioned us to doubt ourselves,
to shrink, to internalize shame.

**Speaking affirmations out loud,
writing them down, letting them live in your body,
is an act of resistance.**

These affirmations are meant to remind you of what
was never truly lost:

your worth, your wisdom, your power.

Say them.

Breathe them in.

Let your affirmations rewrite the stories colonialism
tried to implant in you.



**REST
IS
MY
BIRTHRIGHT.**



**I DO NOT
NEED TO
EARN
REST.**



Nervous System Reclamation

**I AM SAFE
TO
SLOW
ALL THE
WAY
DOWN.**



**I AM
WILLING TO
RELEASE
URGENCY
&
EMBRACE
PRESENCE.**



**I AM NOT
BEHIND; I
AM MOVING
AT MY OWN
PACE &
THAT'S OK.**



**MY
ANCESTORS'
WISDOM
LIVES WITHIN
ME.**



Unlearning & Relearning

**I GIVE
MYSELF
PERMISSION
TO UNLEARN
COLONIAL
LIES.**



**IT'S OK FOR
ME
TO BE
UNCOMFY.
I'M
LEARNING
TO KEEP
MYSELF
SAFE.**



**MY HEALING
IS MY
COMMUNITY'S
HEALING.**



**I HONOUR
THE
STRUGGLES
OF THOSE
WHO CAME
BEFORE ME.**



Collective Liberation

**I DO NOT
HAVE TO DO
THIS ALONE.
LIBERATION
IS
COLLECTIVE.**



**I CHOOSE
INTERDEPENDENCE
OVER
INDEPENDENCE.**



**WE ARE
BUILDING
SOMETHING
BEYOND
COLONIAL
IMAGINATION.**



**I AM
LIBERATING
MY
IMAGINATION.**



Collective Liberation

I BELONG.



**WE
ALL
BELONG.**



Chapter 9:



Conclusion

Decolonization isn't a checklist. It's not a destination. It's a lifelong process of unlearning, remembering & reclaiming. Some days, it will feel like clarity. Other days, it will feel like grief. All of it is part of the work. All of it belongs.

You belong.

The systems we are dismantling weren't built overnight. They were designed to be all-encompassing – to seep into every part of all of our lives, our thoughts, our bodies, our relationships with ourselves & with others. So, of course, unravelling them will take time. Be patient with yourself. Be kind to yourself. **Be relentless in your commitment.** Be willing to get uncomfortable. Be confident in your ability to safely feel.

You are not alone in this. **Decolonization is collective, relational & ongoing.** It is found in the choices we make every day, in how we rest, how we care for one another, how we challenge oppressive narratives, and how we build the futures colonialism tried to erase.

If you are here, in this time in history, **you have the power to impact real change.** For yourself, your loved ones, your communities & the planet.

Thank you for being a part of the Traumatized & THRIVING Community



Final Action Steps:

- ♥ Commit to lifelong learning. Read, listen & stay open to growth.
- ♥ Share knowledge in your communities. Decolonization isn't just personal, it's communal.
- ♥ Challenge colonial systems in your workplace, school & daily life. Call out injustice. Demand better.
- ♥ Prioritize rest, joy & healing. A decolonized world isn't just one without oppression, it's one where we **THRIVE**.
- ♥ Stay accountable. Unlearning isn't a one-time thing. Keep checking in with yourself & your impact.

Self-Reflection Prompt

What does decolonization look like in your daily life moving forward? What's one practice, boundary or commitment you can make moving forward?

Somatic Reflection

Close your eyes. Take a slow, deep breath in. As you exhale, imagine shedding the layers of colonial conditioning you've carried. Place your hands over your heart and whisper: I am unlearning. I am remembering. I am free. Let that truth settle in your body. **Let it guide you forward.**

Chapter 10:



Glossary

Accountability	is taking responsibility for your actions & making things right if you hurt someone. It's not just saying sorry, but actually fixing the harm & making sure it doesn't happen again.
Act of Defiance	is when you refuse to follow unfair rules or systems.
Assimilation	is when society expects you to change who you are to fit in with a bigger group, even if it means giving up your culture, language, or traditions. It's being told you have to dress, speak and/or act a certain way just to be accepted, instead of being allowed to be yourself.
Awareness	is to understand that something exists.
Anti-Racist Lens	means looking at the world in a way that actively challenges racism & works toward fairness & justice for all races.
Beliefs	are the principles, ideas & values you think are true or important. They help guide how you act & make choices.
Belief Systems	are bigger sets of connected beliefs that shape how people see the world. It's like a rulebook in your mind that helps you decide what's right, wrong or important. Different cultures, religions, & families have different belief systems that guide how they live.
Bias	is when someone has a favourite idea or group & treats other ideas or groups unfairly because of it. Bias can make us see things in a way that's not totally fair or true because we're only focused on one side of the story.

Capitalism

is a relentless system where people & companies make & sell things to earn money. This includes most things people need to survive, such as food, homes & healthcare, which cost money to get. Some people get very rich, but others struggle because money isn't shared equitably.

Centering Whiteness

means treating white people, their culture & their ideas & feelings as the most important or "normal," while ignoring or treating other cultures as less important.

Collective

means a group of people working together & sharing responsibility. It's like a team where everyone helps each other out instead of just thinking about themselves.

Collective Liberation

is the idea that no one is truly free until everyone is free. It means working together to make sure all people have the rights, safety & dignity they deserve.

Collective Process

is a way of making decisions & solving problems together as a group, rather than one person having all the power.

Colonialism

is when powerful countries take land, resources & control away from Indigenous Peoples & force them to live by new rules.

Colonizer

is someone or a group of people who go to another land, use power to take control of it, and try to force the Indigenous People of that land to follow their cultural ways and rules.

Colonial Mindset	is when people believe that the way colonizers did things, such as their language, culture or rules, is better than the ways of the people they took the land from (Indigenous Peoples).
Communal Care	is when a whole group of humans take responsibility for each other's wellbeing. They look out for each other, offer support & resources to each other when needed.
Cultural Erasure	is when a group's language, traditions & ways of life are slowly erased because of colonization, forced assimilation or unfair systems.
Decolonization	means examining all your beliefs & the ways you were taught to perceive yourself, others, your environment & the Earth.
Decolonizing Work	is the process of unlearning harmful ideas from colonization, and rebuilding systems, knowledge & communities in a way that honour Indigenous & non-Western ways of life.
Developed	a country calling itself "developed" assumes that it is better than, more complex than, and more sophisticated than the countries it takes advantage of.
Emotional Safety	is feeling secure to express your feelings without fear of being judged, hurt, or ignored.
Embodiment	is when you fully feel & experience things with your body, not just in your mind – both working in harmony.

Empire	is a large group of lands, states or countries that are all controlled by one powerful ruler or government.
Eurocentric	means looking at the world from the point of view of Europe (aka Western or White), and believing that European (Western or White) culture, ideas, ways of doing things & being are the most important, smartest or the best.
Fawn	is when you try really hard to make others happy so you don't "get in trouble" or feel unsafe.
Fight	is when your body gets ready to protect itself. You might feel angry, aggressive, or like you want to yell or push back.
Flight	is when your body wants to run away when you feel scared or unsafe.
Forced Assimilation	is when people are made to give up their culture, language & traditions to fit into the dominant culture. It is being forced to change who you are just to be accepted.
Freeze	is when you are scared or overwhelmed, and may feel physically stuck, still or shut down.
Gaslighting	is when someone tries to make you doubt what you know or feel is true. Repeatedly.
Genocide	is when one group deliberately harms or kills another group of people because of their race, religion, or where they come from in the world, with the goal of destroying that nation or group.

Grounding	is a way to calm your body down & feel connected to the present moment, especially when you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed.
Harm	is when the actions of something or someone causes pain, either physically, emotionally or spiritually. It can be from words, actions, or even unfair systems that hurt people over time.
Indoctrination	is when you are being taught what to believe without being provided all the information, being able to ask questions or to think for yourself.
Intellectualize	is when someone prioritizes thinking about feelings & problems like a puzzle to solve instead of actually feeling them in their body.
Interdependence	means people rely on each other and help each other out. Like a team where everyone has different jobs, and all jobs are equally important.
Intergenerational Trauma	sometimes referred to as "historical trauma", is emotional & psychological impact of a negative event, such as violence, racism, or other big harms in history, that is passed down through families.
LANDBACK	is a movement that fights for Indigenous Peoples' rights to their land after it was forcibly taken by colonizers. Landback is about restoring the connection between Indigenous communities & their homelands.
Liberation	is true freedom, not just for one person, but for everyone. It means breaking free from unfair and oppressive systems that keep people from THRIVING .

Mutual Aid	is an alternative system of care where humans exchange support, not because they have to, but because they care about each other's well-being. Support might be in the form of resources, services, items or assistance.
Narratives	are the stories or beliefs told about the world and/or others. Sometimes, these stories are true, and sometimes they leave out important details or only show one side.
Nervous System Safety	is making sure your body & mind feel calm, secure & not stuck in survival mode – flight, freeze, fawn, fight)
Othered	means when people are treated as if they are different or not part of the group, like they don't belong.
Pre-Colonial Histories	are the stories of the Indigenous people & cultures that existed before outsiders came & stole their land & took control. It's about how people lived, their traditions, languages, and how they took care of the land & each other, long before things changed.
Psychological Warfare	is when one person or group of people try to confuse or interfere with another person or group of people's thinking, ideas or beliefs, to make them feel confused, scared, or upset. Psychological warfare may be used instead of, or in addition to, physical violence.
Proximity to Whiteness	means how close someone is treated to white people in society, based on how they look, speak, or act. People who seem "closer" to whiteness often get treated better because of unfair systems, even if they're not white. Proximity to Whiteness can determine who gets more kindness, safety, or opportunities in a world that centers whiteness.

Racial Violence

is when people are hurt – physically, emotionally, or through unfair treatment, because of their race. Racial violence can be committed by individuals, but also by laws & systems that keep racism in place.

Reciprocity

means giving & receiving in a way that is fair & balanced.

Residential Schools

are places where Indigenous children were forced to live away from their families. Residential schools forced Indigenous children to give up their culture, language & traditions, and assimilate. Many children were treated violently & suffered great harm. These schools were created to erase Indigenous identity.

Resistance

is when someone stands up to something unfair. It's like saying, "That's not right," & refusing to go along with it, even if others are doing it. Resistance can be big or small, like speaking up, marching, or just choosing to be yourself in a world that wants you to be someone else. Resistance is ACTION.

Reclamation

means taking back something that was stolen or lost.

Sense of Self

is how you see yourself, what you like, what you don't like, the things you believe, & what's important to you. Things that don't change no matter who you are around.

Sit with discomfort

means allowing yourself to feel difficult emotions instead of ignoring them or trying to change them.

Somatic	is anything that has to do with your body, especially how your body feels when you have big emotions.
Sovereignty	is your personal power to be in charge of yourself, your body, your thoughts, your choices – without someone else controlling you.
Statement of Intent	is a clear message about what someone plans to do and why. An example of a Statement of Intent is your promise to yourself or others about what you believe in & what you are working toward.
Solidarity	is the act of uniting with another person or group of people to share power to overcome oppressive systems. Standing in solidarity with someone means that you are joining together to defend a belief or right that impacts the other person.
Systemic Oppression	are unfair rules, laws, norms & traditions that keep certain groups of people from having the same rights, safety & opportunities as other groups.
THRIVING	is not just surviving, but living fully & joyfully. It's when people & communities have everything they need to grow, heal & be happy.
Trauma	is what happens when something really scary, hurtful, or overwhelming happens, & it makes your body, heart, or mind feel unsafe, even after the thing is over.
Trauma-Informed	is a practice that honors the psychological impact that harmful events can have on people & making sure that spaces, conversations & care are safe & supportive for them

Underdeveloped	is when something hasn't grown or improved as much as it could have. It means the country doesn't have all the things it needs to care for all the people who live there (e.g. hospitals, homes, schools, roads).
Unlearning	is letting go of beliefs & ideas that were taught to us but aren't true or fair.
Western-Centric	is when the world is viewed mainly through the ideas, history & culture of Western countries (like Europe & the U.S.), while ignoring the knowledge & traditions of people from other places.
White Frameworks	are the rules & ideas made by white humans that say what is "normal," "right," or "better", even if they don't work for everyone. They shape EVERYTHING from our history, beauty standards, success definitions & how people are treated.
White Supremacy	is the false belief that white people are better than others & should have more power. This idea has been used to justify racism, unfair systems, & harm against people of colour.
Worker-Owned Collectives	are groups where the people who do the work also make the decisions, and share the money that comes from the products or services. It's not run by a boss who keeps all the power – power is shared by everyone in the group.

Chapter 11:

Resources for Further Learning

▼ BOOKS / ARTICLES

- **A Map of Gender Diverse Cultures** (article) by Badly Licked Bear (PBS)
- **As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance** by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson
- **Decolonizing Trauma Work: Indigenous Stories & Strategies** by Renee Linklater
- **Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds** by adrienne maree brown
- **Healing the American Indian Soul Wound** (article) by Eduardo Duran, Bonnie Duran, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart & Susan Yellow Horse-Davis
- **How We Show Up: Reclaiming Family, Friendship and Community** by Mia Songbird
- **Interdependence** (Blog) by Mia Mingus
- **Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper** (article)
- **Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)** by Dean Spade
- **Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World** by Tyson Yunkaporta
- **The Body is Not an Apology** by Sonya Renee Taylor

▼ VIDEOS

- **From Root to Bone with Dr. Jennifer Mullan** (Podcast)
- **TEDxTalk: What We Carry for Our Ancestors: Intergenerational Healing** by Serene Thin Elk
- **The World We Need Series** by the Story of Stuff
- **What is Mutual Aid?** by Dean Spade & Ciro Carrillo

▼ CREATORS & EDUCATORS

- @decolonizingtherapy
- @decolonizeyourself
- @indigenousrising
- @pat.radical.therapist
- @raytrospectively
- @thebodyisnotanapology

About the Author

I'm the human behind Traumatized & THRIVING, a 45-year-old bi-racial Black lesbian femme, a mama of five, & a trauma & anti-racism educator, consultant, & complex trauma survivor.

I was born & raised in Northern Virginia, just outside of Washington, D.C., & I now live in Tkaronto, now known as Toronto, which in Mohawk means "where there are trees standing in the water".

Like so many of you, I've lived through the layered, compounding trauma of systems that were never built for our THRIVING.

I've survived having an invisible disability, race-related harm, family addiction, narcissistic abuse, institutional betrayal & the violent, sudden death of a loved one. I know what it's like to be shattered by life, to dissociate just to survive, & to feel completely alone in your life.

I also know what it's like to start again, not perfectly, but honestly.

Slowly.

On purpose.

& in alignment.

Warmly,



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**WE
WILL
SAVE US.**



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